

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method in a computing environment for providing interaction between a customer service representative and a consumer, the method comprising:

providing a care system having a single point of entry graphical user interface, wherein said care system includes preconfigured links and relationships among one or more screens of said care system;

providing an option to set aside one or more work areas, wherein said set aside option preserves a first set of tasks or features being utilized by said customer service representative, during the performance of a second set of tasks or features; and

said single point of entry graphical user interface comprising, (1) a navigation window, providing a tree display of options for access to a plurality of informational items relating to servicing a focus customer, (2) a search window providing search access to said informational items, (3) an alert window providing pre-configured notifications to the customer service representative (4) a summary area providing provides synopsis of said informational items, and (5) a content area providing details of said informational items.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising providing one or more customizable fields, that are incorporated into the graphical user interface and informational items of the customer care system.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said second tasks or features is attending to a second customer.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein said care system is configured for a utility company.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein said care system further provides functions to address deregulation requirements of said utility company.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein said care system is customer centered and provides retrieval, display and grouping of information by customer.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein said navigation window, search window, alert window, summary area and content area are simultaneously presented to the customer service representative.
8. a computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 1.

9. A computer system having a memory, an operating system and a central processor, said processor being operable to execute the instructions stored on the computer-readable medium of claim 8.

10. A computer implemented customer care tool comprising:

a billing information component;

an account management component;

an equipment management component; and

an integrated user interface;

wherein said integrated user interface is customer centered and providing interaction between a customer service representative and said billing component, said account management component, and said equipment management component;

said billing component providing access to billing information of a customer and the charges associated with one or more services provided to one or more accounts of said customer;

wherein said one or more accounts are managed and setup utilizing said account management component;

said equipment management component providing information and access relating to any one or more equipment items associated with providing said one or more services to said customer.

11. The system of claim 10 further comprising a work management component, wherein said work management component provides and receives information from said customer service representative relating to one or more tasks that are to be provided by a service provider.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein said work management component further manages work flows and work queues associated with said one or more tasks.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein said management of work flows entails categorizing of said one or more tasks by assignment, output for end user interaction, and system functions including process initiation or application launching.

14. The system of claim 10 wherein said account management component comprises an account-receivables component, which includes customer status details, payment designation and allocation, and selective posting of payments to multiple providers.

15. The system of claim 10, wherein said account management component comprises a credit-rating component, which includes event tracking and weighting assignments.

16. The system of claim 10, wherein said integrated user interface includes a main navigation tree, hyperlinks, push buttons, and browser-like page forward/page backward functionality
17. The system of claim 10 further comprising one or more feature and transaction modules.
18. The system of claim 17, wherein said one or more feature and transaction module is a photographic view module for providing displays of customer bills.
19. The system of claim 17, wherein said one or more feature and transaction modules is a seasonal specification module for associating customer addresses with seasonal periods.
20. The system of claim 17, wherein said one or more feature and transaction modules is a training tools for the training of customer service representatives.
21. The system of claim 17, wherein said one or more feature and transaction modules is a caller identification module which integrates caller identification into the customer care tool.
22. The system of claim 17, wherein said one or more feature and transaction modules is a map view module which integrates map viewing into the customer care tool.

23. The system of claim 10 further comprising a technical support component including messaging and exchange of display information and diagnostic data, wherein messaging and exchange occur between a customer service representative and a vendor of said customer care tool.

24. A customer service software system for use by a customer service representative, comprising:

a hierarchy component for classifying the system representation of one or more service items that relate to one or more accounts of a customer;

means for utilizing said classification to organize, present and access information pertaining to said service items; and

an integrated user interface component to present and access information pertaining to said service items, wherein said integrated user interface provides a navigational display for accessing said one or more service items.

25. The system of claim 24 wherein said integrated user interface further comprises a contact tracking component.

26. The system of claim 24 wherein said integrated user interface further comprises an event generation component that initiates one or more events that are necessary to complete a task selected by the customer service representative.

27. The system of claim 26 wherein said selected task is the addition of a new telephone service and said one or more events includes as necessary, creating a work order for the physical wiring and creating an order for phone poles or other equipment.

28. The system of claim 24, wherein said hierarchy of classification comprises a customer at a first level, one or more accounts at a second level and one or more agreements at a third level, with a one to one or more relationship between said customer and said accounts and a one to one or more relationship between said accounts and said agreements.

29. The system of claim 28 wherein said agreement is for a telephone service.

30. The system of claim 28 wherein said agreement is for a gas service.

31. The system of claim 28 wherein said agreement is for a power service.

32. The system of claim 28, wherein said customer service care system is a utility service care system.

33. The system of claim 28, wherein said customer service care system is a telecommunications service care system.

34. An integrated configurable multi-service customer care and operations tool comprising:

- a service order component;

- a service agreement component;

- a payment collection and adjustment component; and

- a customer centric user interface;

said service order component, said service agreement component, and said payment and adjustment component interfaced to said customer centric user interface;

said customer centric user interface providing a hierarchical relationship between a customer, an account and an agreement for providing customer care and managing customer related operations.

35. The system of claim 34 wherein said customer centric user interface includes a navigation window, a summary area and a content window.



36. The system of claim 34 further comprising a security component for monitoring access and rights to various aspects of the customer care and operations tool.
37. The system of claim 34 further comprising user definable fields for recording or displaying customized information.
38. The system of claim 34, wherein said service order component provides support for a plurality of service types including telephone, wireless, internet, pager, and cable television.
39. The system of claim 38, wherein selection of a first service type presents a first number of display tabs; wherein selection of a second service type presents a second number of display tabs; and wherein said display tabs correspond to a view of information items relating to an aspect of the corresponding service type.
40. The system of claim 38 further comprising support for one or more local service items along with the corresponding charges.

41. The system of claim 40, wherein said one or more local service items includes one or more items from the group consisting of: call waiting, call forwarding and caller id, wherein said one or more service items is presented as a display tab.
42. The system of claim 34 further comprising one or more components from a group consisting of, with payment module, non-pay reconnect module, write-off trigger module, real-time charge and credit module, balance transfer module, and e-bill presentment and payment module.
43. A system for providing a customer care graphical user interface comprising:  
a customer care computing system having an executable customer care application operably stored thereon where said customer care application is operable to control the computing system to access customer care data relating to general customer data and management data and generate a graphical user interface having a navigation scheme operable to provide a single point of entry user interface where customer information and account information is continuously in view.
44. The system for providing a customer care user interface as recited in claim 43 wherein the management data include reports, billing and work flow data.

45. The system as recited in claim 43 wherein the navigation scheme includes a main navigation tree, hyperlinks, push buttons, and browser-like page forward/page backward functionality.